



ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE of PENNSYLVANIA COURTS

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Pennsylvania Judiciary launches system to measure problem-solving courts performance

HARRISBURG — The Pennsylvania Judiciary is launching a new system across the Commonwealth to track problem-solving court case results that are rehabilitating individuals, making communities safer and saving taxpayer dollars.

The specialized software will categorize and capture performance data for individual programs in each county through a sophisticated statewide computer network, known as the Problem-Solving Adult and Juvenile Courts Information System – or PAJCIS.

The new system equips an estimated 1,200 judges, prosecutors, defense attorneys, probation officers, treatment providers, court administrators and others with the tools that: assess recidivism rates; determine jail days averted; calculate fines, costs and restitution collected and evaluate community service hours delivered. In addition the system will quantify such items as the increase in the number of people paying child support and those who have improved their education level by obtaining high school equivalency diplomas.

“This new resource, along with accreditation, is giving the Supreme Court the ability to effectively monitor and administer these programs,” Chief Justice of Pennsylvania Ronald D. Castille said. “Having empirical data in a centralized place will help these courts make sound management and operational decisions about where to invest limited resources and how to more effectively benefit positively the lives of those who enter the court system with certain life issues that may be resolved.”

Problem-solving courts present an alternative to incarceration by placing eligible offenders into supervised programs of treatment and community service rather than jail. Studies have shown these courts curb prison costs, reduce repeat offenses or recidivism and help address societal ills through treatment rather than punishment. Pennsylvania has 95 problem-solving programs operating in its 67 counties, including drug courts; driving under the influence courts; mental health courts and veterans courts.

A voluntary accreditation process for Pennsylvania’s drug courts was approved by the Supreme Court in 2011 to give counties a way to measure how a problem-solving court’s operations compare to proven nationally recognized practices.

Pennsylvania has seen significant growth in the alternative of problem-solving courts, which are tailored to balance local needs and resources, since the first one such court was launched in Philadelphia in 1997.

An AOPC Problem Solving Courts Program team developed PAJCIS after nearly five years of planning. The work was funded in part with a grant from the Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency and incorporated performance measures developed by the National Center for State Courts.

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